

MARYLAND INFLUENZA SURVEILLANCE REPORT



Office of Epidemiology and Disease Control Programs | Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

- Visits to sentinel providers for influenza-like illness are below baseline
- There have been no confirmed cases of influenza reported to DHMH
- There have been no influenza outbreaks reported to DHMH
- Few hospitalizations due to influenza reported to DHMH
- Influenza vaccination saves money from being spent on hospital visits and lost wages

WEEK 41, 2008

INSIDE:

Isolates & Outbreaks 2

Tracking The Flu 3

CDC Week 41 Synopsis 3

Flu Shots Save Money 4

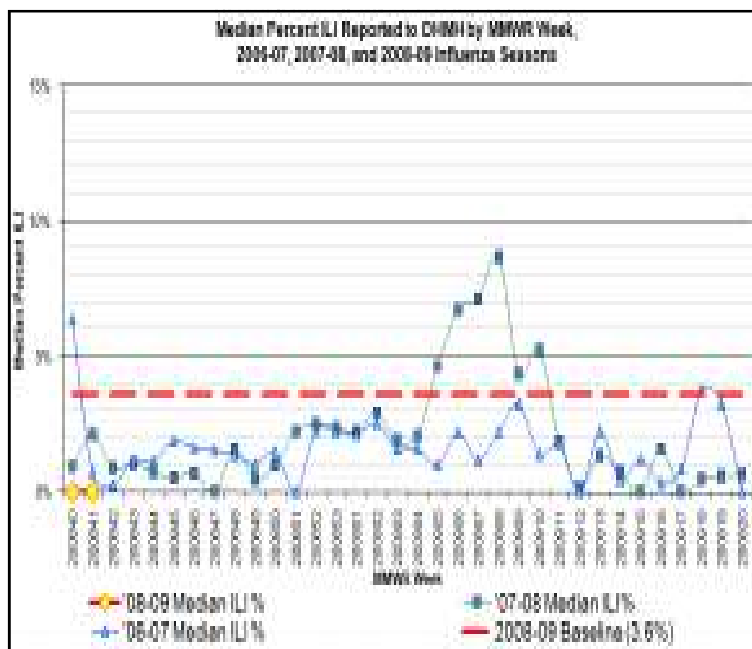
VISITS TO PROVIDERS FOR INFLUENZA-LIKE ILLNESS (ILI)

This week, a total of 89 visits for ILI were reported by 9 providers. The median percent of ILI visits in Maryland was 0.0%. This is **below** the state baseline of 3.6%.

Sentinel providers are health care providers who report to us the proportion of patient visits for influenza like illness. Because of the great variability in reported ILI

proportions among providers each week, the median ILI is used instead of the average. Half of the ILI reports were below the median and half were above.

If you are interested in becoming a sentinel provider, please feel free to contact us at the addresses on page 4.

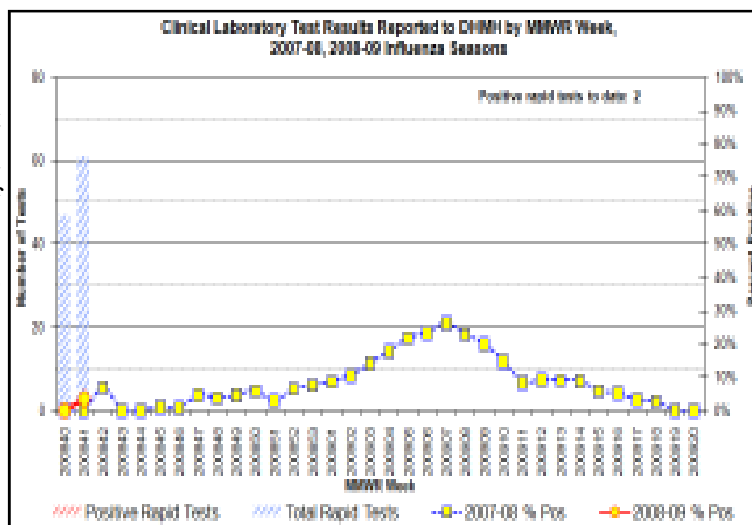


RAPID INFLUENZA TESTS PERFORMED BY SENTINEL CLINICAL LABORATORIES

This week, a total of 59 rapid influenza tests were performed by 14 reporting clinical laboratories. Of these, **2 (3.4%) were positive**.

Because the sensitivity and specificity of rapid flu tests vary with the prevalence of influenza in the population*, rapid

flu tests performed before the first DHMH lab-confirmed case are not counted as confirmed cases for the purpose of surveillance. **Once the DHMH laboratory confirms a case by reference methods, all rapid influenza tests will be counted as confirmed cases.**



* "Rapid Diagnostic Testing for Influenza", Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/diagnosis/rapidclin.htm>

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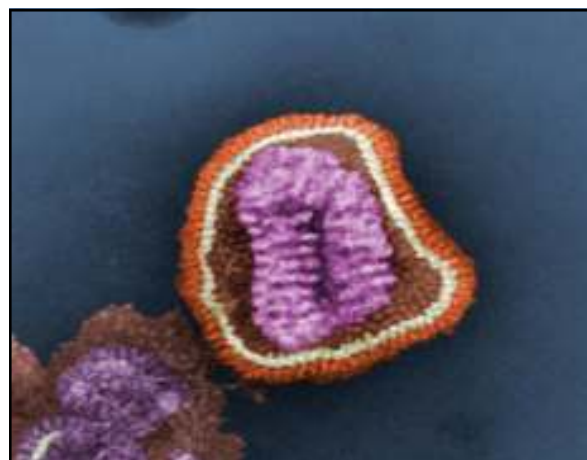
DHMH STATE LABORATORY ISOLATE TYPING AND SUBTYPING

The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Laboratories Administration conducts reference testing for influenza on respiratory samples. These tests are real-time PCR and viral culture. Any sample positive by these methods is considered lab-confirmed.

A sample of isolates proc-

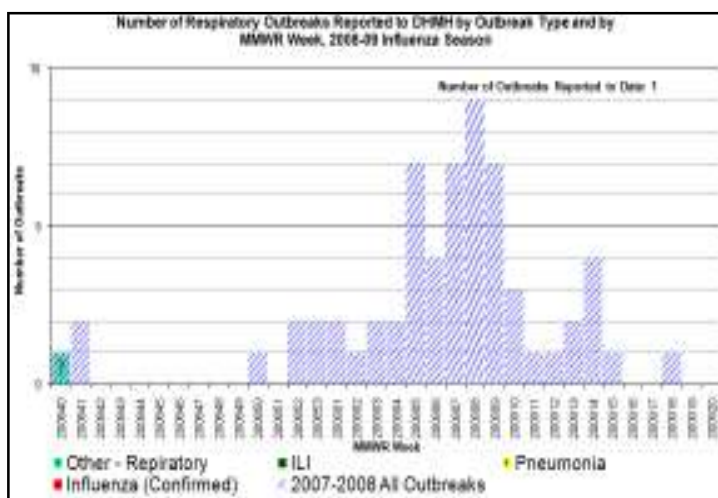
essed at DHMH lab is sent to CDC for further testing, including the determination of the circulating strains.

To date this season, there have been no lab-confirmed cases of influenza reported to DHMH.



Influenza virus electron micrograph (courtesy of the CDC Public Health Image Library)

INSTITUTIONAL OUTBREAKS REPORTED TO DHMH



No outbreaks of influenza or influenza-like illness were reported to DHMH this week.

Although influenza is not a reportable condition in Maryland, outbreaks of influenza in institutional settings are reportable. Please contact your local health

department to report an outbreak.

For more information about outbreak investigations in Maryland, please visit:

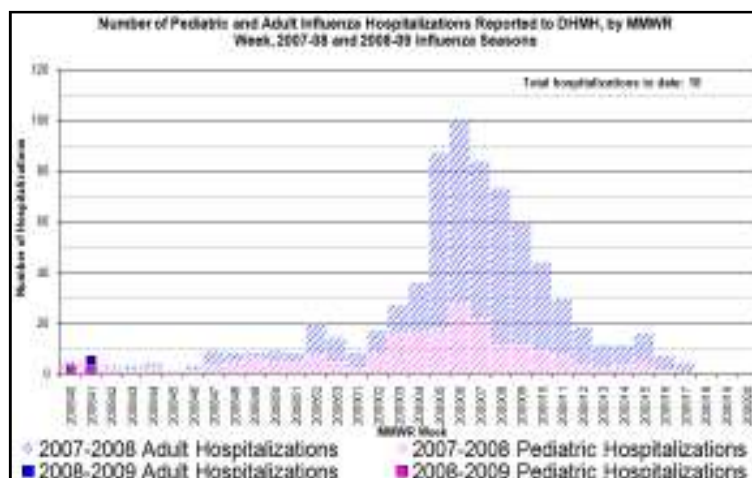
<http://www.edcp.org/>

INFLUENZA HOSPITALIZATIONS REPORTED TO DHMH

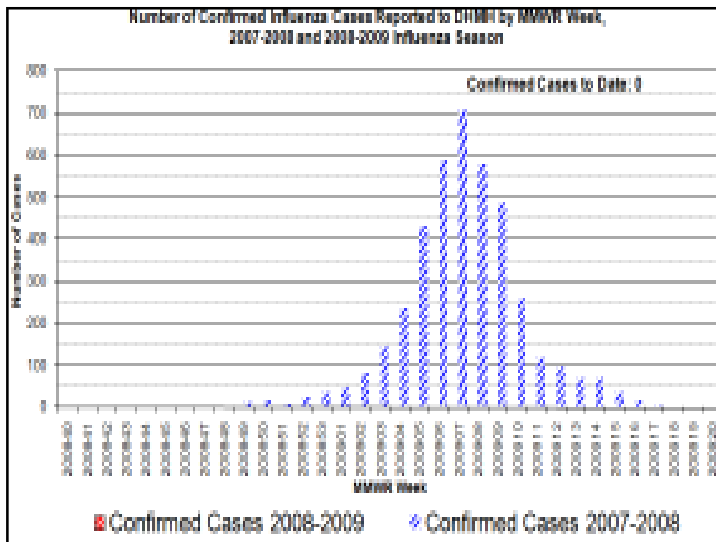
The Emerging Infections Program collects information on a weekly basis from several hospitals in the Baltimore Metro Region on the number of hospitalizations associated with influenza. The number of hospitalizations is grouped by age into two categories: pe-

diatric (for patients under 18 years of age), and adults (for patients 18 years of age and older).

This week, a total of 7 hospitalizations were reported to DHMH. Of these, 4 (57%) were adults and 3 (43%) were pediatric admissions.



MARYLAND LAB-CONFIRMED CASES OF INFLUENZA



Cases are not confirmed by rapid flu test until the first influenza isolate is detected at DHMH lab. After that first isolate, all clinical laboratory tests that are positive are counted as confirmed cases of influenza for surveillance purposes.

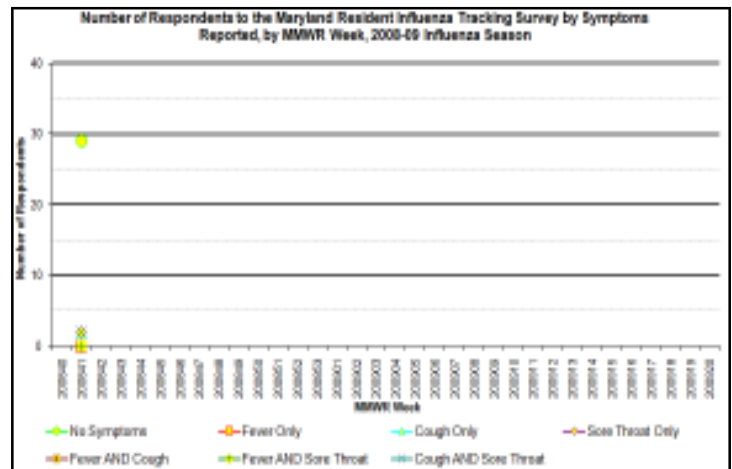
Because there have been no DHMH lab-

confirmed cases of influenza to date, our case count for the 2008-2009 season remains at zero. Last season, we received reports of 4,029 lab-confirmed cases, with the peak number of cases (708) reported on week 7 (February 10-16, 2008).

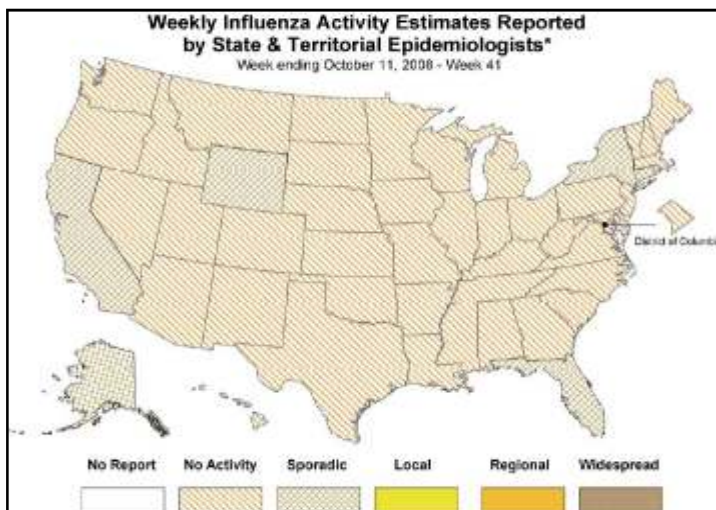
MARYLAND RESIDENT INFLUENZA TRACKING SURVEY

A total of 41 participants signed up at <http://tinyurl.com/flu-enroll> by the end of week 41. (As of the publishing of this report, 157 Maryland residents had signed up.) Of the 41 residents who received the weekly survey, 35 (85%) responded to it. Among the respon-

dents, 6 (17%) reported symptoms. **Four (11%) of the respondents reported getting their flu vaccine this week, a positive report!** Because there is no baseline to compare these results, and the sample size is small, caution must be taken when interpreting the results at this time.



CDC WEEKLY INFLUENZA SURVEILLANCE



According to CDC, “during week 41, a low level of influenza activity was reported in the United States.” Visits to sentinel providers are below baseline, 7 states and Puerto Rico reported “sporadic” influenza activity (the other 43 states reported “no activity”, including Maryland), and about 0.5% of specimens tested were positive for influenza.

“Sporadic” influenza activity

means that visits to providers for ILI are below baseline and that there have been isolated lab-confirmed cases or a lab confirmed outbreak in one institution. So Alaska, California, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, New York, and Wyoming are reporting this level of activity. It is too early to tell where influenza activity will be detected at higher levels.

For more information, visit:

<http://cdc.gov/flu/weekly>

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HEALTHY PEOPLE HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

All information submitted to DHMH through the surveillance systems is voluntary. This information is used to estimate the geographic extent of flu activity, and not the virulence or pathogenicity of circulating viruses. This information is not intended for individual diagnoses.

**ALL INFORMATION IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE AS MORE DATA IS
SUBMITTED AFTER THE PUBLICATION OF THIS REPORT**

If you have any questions about influenza surveillance in Maryland, or you would like to join our Influenza Sentinel Provider Network, please contact Rene F. Najera, MPH, Epidemiologist at the Division of Communicable Disease Surveillance in the Office of Epidemiology and Disease Control Programs.

WE'RE ON THE WEB!!!

WWW.EDCP.ORG

Worth The Money?

Bloomberg News is reporting today that a world-wide influenza pandemic could cost the global economy over \$3 TRILLION, according to a report from the World Bank. At a time when we are all watching Wall Street very carefully, and refusing to open our 401(k) statements, the global burden of a disease like influenza is being overlooked. Never mind the pandemic, what about seasonal influenza?

A study published in The Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics ("Direct Medical Cost of Influenza-Related Hospitalizations in Children", Pediatrics, Vol. 118, No. 5, 11/2006) found that the mean cost of hospitalization for lab-confirmed influenza in children considered at high-risk for complications was over \$15,000 and over \$9,000 for children at low-risk for complications.

What would a child choose if presented with the option of a \$30 flu shot or

missing out on \$9,000 to \$15,000 worth of higher education?

According to David Cutler, professor of Economics at Harvard University, a typical flu season costs the US economy between \$13 billion and \$15 billion. The cost comes from people being absent to work from being too sick themselves or caring for a sick person. Other costs come in the form of money spent to seek medical care and over-the-counter medication.

What would you choose if presented with the option of a \$30 flu shot or missing out on a week's worth of wages and other expenses?

While some of us may be bothered when our health insurance does not cover the flu vaccine, we don't seem to have a problem in spending the same amount of money in 6-8 cups of gourmet coffee, 15 days of cell phone service, or movie tickets for two (plus popcorn and soda). If you are like the typical American, you

will spend about \$800 during the Holidays in gifts for your loved ones. About 4% of that would pay for a flu vaccine.

So, is the flu vaccine worth the money? Anecdotal and scientific evidence say a resounding "YES!"

Bloomberg: www.tinyurl.com/bloomflu

Pediatrics: www.tinyurl.com/pediflu

Mr. Cutler: www.tinyurl.com/cnnflu



A shot in the arm is worth the change in my hand... and then some!